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AUTHOR Bello, Tom
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ABSTRACT

An approach to adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teaching that incorporates everyday telephone use skills is described, and a series of related class activities is outlined. The discussion begins with a method and form for assessing student needs and learning styles. Subsequent sections present specific activities in several categories: getting weather information; getting information about tourist destinations or other places; gaining information about legal requirements and services; telling stories; and leaving a message on an answering machine. Each group of activities begins with preliminary exercises and continues with more advanced or complex activities. The final section provides encouragement and guidelines for teaching those wishing to develop their own classroom activities or homework assignments. (MSE)
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44+ WAYS

TO INTEGRATE

TELEPHONE MESSAGES

INTO AN ADULT ESL CURRICULUM

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I. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: AN OVERVIEW

This book deals with improving English in adult ESL learners through a variety of activities, most of them dealing with telephone answering machines. Because the focus is on adult instruction, this book must begin with some needs assessment. The idea here should be clear.

Adult learners are first of all adults: busy people responsible for their life decisions and for supporting themselves and their families. Most adults know what they like and don't like, and also know how to seek what they like and avoid what they don't like. If adult learners do not feel they are getting what they want, they will vote with their feet and leave the class.

Therefore, the teacher of the adult learner needs to find out early in the course of instruction what the students want. Why are your adult students in your class? What are their expectations? Why are they spending their limited time and, perhaps, their limited money to be with you in your class?

Finding out what students want is usually called NEEDS ASSESSMENT, and when I use this terminology, I am talking about the students' own subjective needs and wants. I am not talking about more objective measures of educational background and language ability. Second language acquisition research has shown that "contrary to a great deal of popular opinion, learners (are) able to articulate long-term goals, and to provide instrumental reasons for attending language classes." So wrote in David Nunan in THE LEARNER-CENTERED CURRICULUM.

To be brief, if you want to keep your students, you have to give them what they want. If you want to know why your students are in your class and what they want, you have to ask them. They will be able to tell you if you ask them in the proper way.

What is the proper way? That depends on the level of your students; the same methods do not work for every level. For example, if your students are literacy or beginning level students, you can use pictures or body language. Do they want more listening? Point to your ear. More writing? Make a writing motion with a pencil, etc. You can ask the questions or give them a questionnaire in the students' native language. You can use a translator.

At a higher level, however, you may interview the students directly or give them a survey or questionnaire. When you do a survey, poll or questionnaire with a higher level class, let the students collect and tabulate results themselves. This activity will give them excellent language practice in speaking and listening. It will help build community by permitting the students to see each other's wants and needs. Thus, they can work together on common goals and also better understand individual differences.

ACTIVITY 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT (ADVANCED)

I enclose for the first activity a needs assessment instrument that I developed for my own students, an advanced multi-level class. This particular instrument has been field-tested with several classes and teachers. As with all the activities and handouts in this book, you may use this form or develop your own. The main idea is to get a sense of your students' goals for learning English; then to find what life and language skills (e.g. employment or housing concerns; speaking, listening, grammar, etc.) and how (method of instruction) they want to learn them.

What I usually do is assign this questionnaire or survey as homework after I go over it in class. Then, I divide the class in groups or pairs, depending on the size of the class, and give each group or pair a question from the survey. As a result, everyone is involved in assessing each other. The results are tabulated on the board for all to see. Individual papers are then collected and kept for individual interviews with students at a later date, usually one interview a class session.

For this particular needs assessment for the activities in this book, if your students check a variety of answers that involve building their listening skills or using the telephone, then, please, continue with this book. However, if your students are not interested in improving their listening skills or not interested in using the telephone better, then, please, choose another supplement. Thank you!

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I. WHY I WANT TO LEARN (GOALS):
I want to learn better English to (check ONE):
1. Live better with American people, make more American friends (LIFE).
2. Get a good (or better) job (EMPLOYMENT).
3. Go to college (EDUCATION)
4. Other goal (please write) _____

II. WHAT I WANT TO LEARN (LANGUAGE SKILLS):
The English language skills I most want to practice and improve are (check TWO): SPEAKING, LISTENING, READING, WRITING, PRONUNCIATION, VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR, SPELLING

III. WHAT I WANT TO LEARN (LIFE SKILLS):
I want to learn better English to (check THREE on each side):

(Listening and Speaking)	(Reading and Writing)
1. Talk to American friends	1. Read the newspaper
2. Go for a job interview	2. Fill out a job application
3. Use the telephone better	3. Write telephone messages
4. Talk to the doctor, dentist	4. Read medical information
5. Talk to people at work	5. Write a business memo
6. Talk to people at college	6. Write college essays
7. Understand TV better	7. Write letters in English
8. Understand American music	8. Read stories
9. Other: _____	9. Other: _____

IV. HOW DO YOU LIKE TO LEARN (LEARNING STYLE):

PLEASE CHECK FOR EACH:	YES	SO-SO	NO
1. By listening to the teacher	1.		
2. By working alone	2.		
3. By working in pairs (two students)	3.		
4. By working in small groups	4.		
5. By working with a textbook	5.		
6. By working with the telephone	6.		
7. By working with language tapes	7.		
8. By working with videos	8.		
9. By working with computers	9.		
10. By doing homework	10.		
11. By going on field trips	11.		
12. By other ways: _____			

V. HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE TO DO HOMEWORK OR STUDY OUTSIDE OF CLASS EACH DAY?

VI. A BRIEF LETTER (On the back of this paper, please write a letter telling why you are coming to class and what you most want to learn. THANK YOU!)

II. THE WEATHER

ACTIVITY 2: PRE-LISTENING DISCUSSION (INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED)

A good way to introduce students to this answering machine activity is to discuss with them this topic:

What things are safe and unsafe to talk about with Americans?

I usually divide the class into two groups and one group comes up with, say, three things that are safe to talk about and the other group chooses three that are unsafe or dangerous.

They usually enjoy this activity and come up with lists that may include under safe: sports, weather, jobs, children; and under dangerous: how old the American is, how much money the American makes, religion, politics.

There is not really any right or wrong answer here, but students enjoy discussing these things. And students who have jobs and have been in the United States for several years usually have their own opinions about what areas are safe or dangerous. And of course what is safe or dangerous often depends on the nature of the relationship, the circumstances, individual differences, etc. Yet most students realize that the weather is something safe to talk about and that Americans often talk about the weather at the work site as a topic for small talk.

ACTIVITY 3: PRE-LISTENING DISCUSSION (ALL LEVELS)

This discussion may flow naturally from Activity 2 or may initiate the listening exercise without Activity 1.

At all levels, adult ESL students need to be familiar with sources of information. This discussion focuses on that need.

This discussion usually works best for me as a whole class discussion and I ask the class:

Where or how do you find out about the weather?

The class usually tells me that they find out about the weather by watching TV, by listening to the radio, by reading the newspaper, by going outside and seeing directly. Occasionally they will tell me that they can find out about the weather by calling on the telephone, but most students in most of my classes do not know this way. As we discuss sources of information--here about the weather--, most students feel that listening on the telephone is demanding listening practice because they can't see who is talking; they can only listen. However, many students enjoy the challenge! That leads us to the homework: calling on the telephone to find out about the weather. Most areas now have a number that the phone company, a local bank or the local newspaper provides to find out about the weather. Look in the phone book or call information.

ACTIVITY 4: PRE-LISTENING VOCABULARY (ALL LEVELS)

For any activity in this book, I recommend that the teacher listen first to the homework that you are about to give and preview any vocabulary that the students may have trouble with. Some possible words here are: humidity, barometric pressure, chance of showers, thunderstorms. Pre-listening vocabulary work helps to prepare and encourage the students to do their homework.

ACTIVITY 5: FINDING OUT THE WEATHER: (Local) **703-936-1212** (INTERMEDIATE)

Give students the following worksheet or write the instructions on the board. The advantage of having a worksheet is that they may remember to do the work and they will have the number before them.

WILL IT RAIN TOMORROW?

Call **703-936-1212** and listen as many times as you want.

1. What time did you call?

2. What was the temperature when you called?

3. What will the weather be tomorrow?

ACTIVITY 6: FINDING OUT THE WEATHER (BEGINNING)

Give the students the above worksheet and tell them to involve their whole family. Usually one person in the family will help them, especially the children. Or give your students just one question; for example, Will it rain tomorrow? and have them tell you, simply, yes or no. Or have them just tell you the temperature when they called. Any single piece of information. But have them do the listening outside the class and report back the next class. Have them tell you what time they called and then yes or no or whatever single piece of information you asked them to find.

ACTIVITY 7: FINDING OUT THE WEATHER (ADVANCED)

Give the students the same worksheet, but now take the activity one step further and make it a listening and writing activity. Have them write as much of the weather report as they can understand, even word for word if they can.

ACTIVITY 8: POST-LISTENING WRITING, READING AND DISCUSSION (ALL LEVELS)

The next class, divide the blackboard into enough spaces for each student who did his or her homework to be able to record what he or she heard on the telephone. Arrange the student writing chronologically from those who called first to those who called last. If enough students did their homework, you will have stretched across the board the pattern of the temperature across the day or any changes in the weather predictions. Even at the beginning level, some students may hear about rain and some may not, depending on the changes in the weather on that particular day. At the higher levels, the whole board should be filled with student writing. Students can then read each other's weather reports and discuss new vocabulary or any differences in what they heard at various times throughout the day and night.

ACTIVITY 9: LISTENING IN CLASS (ALL LEVELS)

Teachers can make their own weather tapes, of course, at a level of difficulty that is appropriate for the level they are teaching. It can be an actual report culled from the weather for the particular day on TV, the radio or the telephone; or they can use their own imaginations. Play the report in class and focus the students on a particular question.

Several listening books do weather reports. I would recommend GREAT IDEAS and LISTENING TASKS, both published by Cambridge University Press. After doing the local weather report from the telephone, you might check these two texts which do national weather reports. Again, you might make your own national weather report and supply the students with a map of the United States and have them listen for the temperature and weather in various cities across the United States.

I enclose a map of the United States to encourage you to make your own national weather report as a follow up to the work with the telephone.

MAP OF THE UNITED STATES

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ACTIVITY 10: WEATHER IDIOMS DISCUSSION (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

One follow-up activity would be to give the students various weather idioms to discuss in small groups or to take home and try to find out the proper meaning from American neighbors or co-workers. Students usually enjoy working with idioms.

Some possible weather idioms would include the following sentences:

1. You are the sunshine of my life.
2. The night is always darkest just before the dawn.
3. Every cloud has a silver lining.
4. It always rains on my parade!
5. April showers bring May flowers.

No doubt you may be able to think of others.

ACTIVITY 11: WRITING ABOUT THE WEATHER (ALL LEVELS)

Another follow-up activity would be a cross-cultural writing assignment where students would write about the weather in their countries or compare the weather in their country to the weather here.

Student writing may then be collected and gathered into a little book to be illustrated, copied and distributed to all the students. Or the writing could be posted around the room, again with student illustrations.

A variety of writing tasks suggest themselves here. You could ask your students to write about their favorite season or favorite weather. You could talk about feelings; for example, asking how does rain make you feel? Or what did you do the last time it snowed?

Whatever writing task you choose, let the students read each other's writing and then discuss, so that you have integrated all the language skills; here, writing and reading, then speaking and listening.

ACTIVITY 12: CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS (ALL LEVELS)

In doing needs assessment, most of my classes really want to improve their speaking skills. I try to incorporate a lot of small group discussion and informal whole class discussion into my lesson plans. I also try to interview each student, one a day, either at the break or for ten minutes after class. Another way for students to practice their speaking is at the beginning of each class to have a different student speak to the whole class. These presentations may be personal or impersonal. If impersonal, you might ask students to talk briefly about the news and weather. Pass a sign-up sheet around and post it so students know which day is theirs. Then let them call for the weather report as they have already practiced and make their presentation to the class at the next session. This activity often requires constant reminding and encouraging from the teacher until students perceive the continuity and consistency of the task at the beginning of each class.

ACTIVITY 13: CALLING ABOUT THE WEATHER AND NEWS: (Local) **202-334-9000** (ADVANCED)

Again, check your telephone book or local dial assistance/information number. Your local newspaper or television station may run a service where you can call and get a weather and/or news summary. For example, in the Washington metropolitan area, THE WASHINGTON POST has an excellent answering machine service called "Post-Haste." It takes some patience and a college education to figure out, so I would not recommend this except to higher level students. The basic number is 202-334-9000, but this number only opens the door to countless other numbers. Just to get to the main index, you push 1000. 1001 is an even longer menu, plus user tips. 2000 gives you stockquotes. 3000 is financial news, all the various financial markets. 4000 is sports news. 5000 is a five-minute Associated Press report of the news, updated every hour. 5100 is a two-minute report updated on the half-hour on weekdays.

9000 is the weather and this service is much more extensive than the 703-936-1212 number I gave earlier. 9100 gives you the weather for the Washington area. 9200 gives you the weather for the beaches and mountains. 9300 gives marine weather. 9-USA gives you weather for the whole country. 9 plus the first three letters of a major city gives you the weather for that city. For example, Chicago would be 9-CHI; Boston would be 9-BOS.

You could let your students just play with this service. Ask them to find out which numbers give you which information, or simply ask them to report back what they discovered.

If you plan something like the presentations in ACTIVITY 12, calling this number, plus 5000 or 5100, will provide a quick source for news; 9100 a quick source for weather.

I don't want to encourage gambling, but 202-334-9000 ext 7300 gives the Virginia Lottery, and even low level students could report back the winning numbers.

III. GOING PLACES

ACTIVITY 14: PRE-LISTENING DISCUSSION (ALL LEVELS)

I have never been in a class that did not want to make at least an occasional field trip. Field trips can give students a great amount of informal English learning: speaking and listening to their teacher and classmates outside the classroom; reading signs along the way; seeing new places; getting a sense of the surrounding area. Evening classes limit the selection, but a trip to a restaurant or a shopping mall are possible.

Discuss with the students possible places for a field trip. Excellent field trips can be found in any area. Do a whole class activity where you ask the students where they would like to go. Or list some places on the board and have the students discuss and vote on their first choice. Many of the possible places to see in the Washington area have recorded messages, and this discussion is a prelude to have the students call the various numbers for information.

ACTIVITY 15: PRE-LISTENING PREPARATION: SHOWING A VIDEO (ALL LEVELS)

You or a fellow teacher or the local library may have a video of sights in your area or nearby. You might get one of these to show your students what's out there to see.

ACTIVITY 16: PRE-LISTENING PREPARATION: READING MATERIALS ABOUT YOUR LOCAL AREA OR NEARBY PLACES OF INTEREST. (ALL LEVELS)

Almost every museum, old home or "place of interest" prints a pamphlet or brochure that you can pick up or they can mail to you. Students could call, but it might take several days, at best, for this information to come. It's quicker if you pick it up. Then in small groups have the students look at, read and talk about the various places they might want to visit. After having your students talk about possible places to visit, and if possible, after their viewing a video or reading various brochures, the students should be ready to make some calls for more detailed information about their particular places to visit.

ACTIVITY 17: READING THE TELEPHONE BOOK TO FIND NUMBERS TO CALL. (ALL LEVELS)

The telephone book does not make exciting reading, nor is it exactly user-friendly to non-natives. Still, the telephone book does offer information that is not easily available elsewhere, especially to students who find reading English to be less threatening to talking to an American on the telephone to ask for information.

Assuming your school has access to a number of telephone books, you can distribute these books and have the students find various numbers that they will later call. Government buildings can often be found in the blue government pages in the middle of the telephone book. Restaurants can be found in the yellow pages. At the lower levels, a group of students can work together to find a single number. At the higher levels, you might prepare a worksheet of numbers for the students to find and have the students work individually or in pairs.

After finding the numbers, the students would then, for homework, call one or more of the numbers. If you have had your students find a series of numbers, divide the class up so that different students are calling different numbers.

ACTIVITY 18: USING A JIG-SAW TECHNIQUE FOR COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN SHARING INFORMATION FROM THE ANSWERING MACHINES. (ALL LEVELS)

Say you have 12 students in the class. Divide the students into 3 groups with four students in each group. Give one listening task to each group. Stress that all members must do their homework and must come to class the next day, or their group will suffer. Some one will, inevitably, be absent or forget to do the assignment, but four in a group is small enough to encourage individual responsibility yet large enough to provide some margin of insurance.

For example, each group could call a different place and find out information for the field trip. The next day, if all goes well, each group will assemble and share the information they, as a group, collected for their particular task. Then one member from each group will go to each of the other two groups and share the information. At the end of this activity, with any luck, each group will have shared its information not only within its own membership but also with the other groups.

Of course, this activity could be done a number of ways. Each group could call different numbers, as the example above. Each group could also call the same number, but be asked different pieces of information. For example, in the Washington area, the whole class could call, say, the Air and Space Museum for film times (ACTIVITY 23), but one group would call for the times for TO FLY; another for THE BLUE PLANET, etc. Or the whole class could call the White House and one group could find the days and hours the White House is open; another group could find the nearest Metro stops; another, the price of admission; etc. I have even seen a jig-saw cloze exercise where students were given the transcript of a particular recorded message, but each group had different blanks on their transcript. Only when the groups shared could they get the whole message.

As stressed earlier, the teacher should always listen to the telephone message first before assigning it. When doing so, the teacher can think how to divide the information given into a variety of tasks.

The whole purpose of an activity like this is to build cooperation and individual responsibility within your class membership, as well as to integrate the language skills, working speaking into what is essentially a listening focus.

ACTIVITIES 19 TO 26 ARE ALL LOCAL "PLACES OF INTEREST" IN THE WASHINGTON AREA. I LEAVE THEM HERE AS EXAMPLES OF "PLACES OF INTEREST" IN YOUR AREA: A MUSEUM OR HISTORIC SITE, A GOVERNMENT BUILDING OR CHURCH. THE REFERENCE LIBRARIAN AT YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY MIGHT BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU SOME IDEAS. AN EXCELLENT ACTIVITY WOULD BE A TRIP TO THE LOCAL LIBRARY TO FIND OUT ABOUT PLACES TO VISIT.

ACTIVITY 19: CALLING SMITHSONIAN VISITOR INFORMATION: **202-357-2700** (BEGINNING)

Calling this number for an intermediate to advanced class would be equivalent to a pre-listening activity, for this number just gives you other numbers to call. But for a beginning class, this number would allow you to divide the class into half and each half bring back a single number to call. If you assign this number, you could ask students, for example: What number do I call for Dial-A-Museum, the National Zoo, the National Gallery of Art or the films at the Air and Space Museum?

I would stress only one number for them to concentrate on, and which number could be chosen by them based on the previous classroom discussion about possible field trips and places of interest.

ACTIVITY 20: CALLING DIAL-A-MUSEUM: **202-357-2020** (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

If intermediate/advanced students are interested in visiting one of the Smithsonian museums, this number is perhaps the best to call. A worksheet might ask for the following information:

1. How many Smithsonian museums are there?

2. How many museums are on the Mall?

4. What are some of these museums?

5. What days are the museums open?

6. What hours are the museums open?

7. How much does it cost to enter a Smithsonian museum?

8. Which Metro station is most convenient for the museums on the Mall?

9. Is free parking available?

ACTIVITY 21: CALLING THE NATIONAL ZOO: **202-673-4800** (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

This recording is a bit much for a beginning student. At a higher level, students might focus, perhaps, on finding the following information:

1. What forms of transportation go to the zoo?
2. What is the nearest Metro station?
3. How much does the zoo cost?
4. When is the Zoo open? What days? What hours each day?
5. When is the best time to see the panda?
6. What buildings are open?

ACTIVITY 22: CALLING THE AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM FOR FILMS: **202-357-1686** (BEGINNING)

Ask your students to find the times for one of the films. The most popular movies are TO FLY and BLUE PLANET. Both movies have morning and afternoon times. If you have a morning class that would like to see one of these movies, ask the class to find the time for the first showing.

These movies carry an admission charge, though the museum itself is free. You might ask to students to also listen to the admission charge.

ACTIVITY 23: CALLING THE AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM FOR FILMS: **202-357-1686** (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

The Air and Space Museum shows 6 different movies. Each movie is given a brief explanation on the tape, plus times for each movie. According to the level of your class, you might ask your students to process this information: perhaps, a little about each of the 6 movies. Let the class then choose which movie or movies they would like to see, time and expense permitting. Ask them to check for admission charges and show times. They might also check for group admissions.

ACTIVITY 24: CALLING THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART: **202-737-4215** (ALL LEVELS)

If students wish to go to the National Gallery of Art (not a top choice in my experience), they may call this number for information about films and lectures and exhibits. At a lower level, you might have them listen for when the museum is open. At a higher level, you might have them find what time are the general tours which provide a good introduction to the West Wing and the East Wing of the National Gallery.

ACTIVITY 25: CALLING THE KENNEDY CENTER: **202-467-4600** (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

Although the Kennedy Center is a wonderful place to walk around, especially at night when the students can go outside and look at the lights of Georgetown or the Lincoln Memorial, the cost of the show will be prohibitive to student (and teacher) budgets. You might ask students to find out what shows are playing. Or (gulp) how much tickets are to the various shows.

ACTIVITY 26: CALLING THE WHITE HOUSE FOR A TOUR: **202-456-7041** (ALL LEVELS)

If I were forced to list the most popular tourist site that my students, over the years, wanted to see, I would say the White House. I would also say that going to the White House has not been our most popular field trip, in hindsight, because usually the wait (one hour or more) is longer than the tour (about 10-15 minutes). Nevertheless, students want to go to the White House, and I will always take them, if they so choose.

Questions that you might give them to answer (one question per group at a lower level; several questions or even a worksheet per student at a higher level) would include:

1. What days and hours will the White House be opened?
2. Is there any admission charge? Do you need tickets?
3. Is there any free parking?
4. What are the nearest Metro stops?
5. Which gate do you enter?

As with any of these listening activities, the teacher should preview the recording first and make appropriate other questions. The teacher should always be ready to focus on any vocabulary that might prove troublesome to the students.

ACTIVITY 27: POST-LISTENING DEBATE (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

After students have narrowed their field trip choices down to, say, two or three, and after they have seen the brochures and made their calls and collected all the information, then, you could have a brief, say, 10-15 minute debate, where students choose one of the places and debate the relative merits of, say, in the Washington area, the National Zoo or the National Gallery of Art. Questions could be asked by the rest of the class. Time should be allowed for rebuttal. When all the points have been made and questions answered, the whole class should vote where they want to go on their field trip.

ACTIVITY 28: GOING ON THE FIELD TRIP (ALL LEVELS)

After the students have listened to the information about one of the places they have chosen to visit, let them plan the field trip and GO. Have a good time! Make an effort to engage and talk to all the students so that they can practice their speaking and listening. At a lower level, have a buddy system so that no one will get lost. Count heads and have everybody keep an eye out for each other. Bring a camera. Take enough pictures to get the whole class, all the major sites and some pictures of individual students, especially if the students so request it. Some students will always want to have their picture taken. Others will not. As always, respect individual differences. Please, develop the pictures at one of those one-hour processing places so that the pictures can be shared at the next class. Sure, it costs more money, but students will always split the expense, and the pleasure is greater if enjoyed before everyone forgets. Enjoy!

ACTIVITY 29: DISCUSSING THE FIELD TRIP (ALL LEVELS)

On the day after the field trip, have the students form small groups to discuss what they liked best about the field trip. Share the pictures that you have taken as a reminder to what happened (see ACTIVITY 28).

I have also had success with an interview, where one student, self-selected, is interviewed by another student or the whole class about what happened on the field trip. Students could be grouped together to think of possible questions to ask. Instead of one student receiving all the questions, you could have a panel. You could have the students who didn't go on the field trip ask questions to those who did.

ACTIVITY 30: WRITING ABOUT THE FIELD TRIP (ALL LEVELS)

Yes, I know, this activity can kill all the fun of the field trip and make certain that your students never vote again to go on another field trip. But the key word is "can," not "must." This writing activity is intended not to kill but to preserve the fun of the field trip. Besides, no ESL student practices his or her writing as much as he or she should.

Perhaps one of the easiest ways to ease students into this activity is to use the photographs from the field trip (again, see ACTIVITY 28). Using one photograph per student or per group, have the student(s) write the story of what happened in the picture. Or keeping the groupings from ACTIVITY 29, let the students choose whether they want to write a report as a group or individually about what they liked best or about any aspect of the field trip. Or they could write a brief article for a newspaper based on the interviews in ACTIVITY 29.

Let the students work together, individually or with you, the teacher, depending on their individual preference. Let them take the writing home, if they wish. If they use the pictures, you might post photos and stories around the room or out in the hall. You may gather all the stories into a book to be printed for each student. In any case, share the student writing. Publish each student.

ACTIVITY 31: CALLING A LOCAL NUMBER FOR TRAVEL INFORMATION (ALL LEVELS)

Most areas have a taxi, bus, train or plane information service that might provide this information by recorded message. For example, in the Washington area, we have The Washington Flyer: 202-685-1400. The Washington Flyer is the official transportation link to the two Washington airports (Dulles and National). It has an express bus between the airports, buses to the airports and the taxis. If you push various buttons, you find out various information. You might ask your low-level students a single question, like, What information will I get if I push 1? or What number should I push to find information about the taxi service? At a higher level, you might ask students to get more detailed information; for example, about how often the express bus runs between National and Dulles airports and how much does it cost.

ACTIVITY 32: IN CLASS LISTENING ABOUT FLIGHTS AT AN AIRPORT (ALL LEVELS)

A good follow-up activity to local transportation or travel information would be to let students listen in class to announcements over the loud speaker system at an airport. Both LISTENING TASKS and GREAT IDEAS (mentioned before in ACTIVITY 9) have such listening activities in their books. At a lower level, LISTENING TASKS has a worksheet asking for limited information. GREAT IDEAS would be better for a higher level, though LISTENING TASKS would also work if you devise your own worksheet requesting more information than the text does. By the way, I don't work for their publisher, but LISTENING TASKS and GREAT IDEAS are my two favorite books for a rich variety of fun listening activities.

IV. THE LAW

ACTIVITY 33: PRE-LISTENING DISCUSSION (ALL LEVELS)

Nobody likes to admit it, but we all get tickets. A good way to work your students into this listening activity is simply to ask them if anyone has ever gotten any moving violations, like a speeding ticket. Or you might begin the discussion by asking how many students drive. If they have their driver's license, then they have some knowledge of the traffic laws. You might then ask them why they might be given a ticket. You might also ask them how they pay for the tickets. You might also initiate a general discussion, appropriate to your level, about laws and the police in the United States and in the students' countries. What might be acceptable in one country, for example, giving money to a policeman to get off, might land a student in jail here.

It is very important to talk about laws and the police in the United States.

There is an excellent video entitled "It's the Law" which can help focus the discussion. This video may be obtained by contacting the Arlington Education and Employment Program (703-358-4200). Your local police department may have a variety of materials for distribution and discussion; your area's Department of Motor Vehicles will probably have material as well.

ACTIVITY 34: CALLING ABOUT TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS: YOUR LOCAL TRAFFIC COURT. FOR EXAMPLE: **703-246-2364** (TRAFFIC DIVISION FOR THE GENERAL DISTRICT COURT OF FAIRFAX COUNTY) (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

As a Fairfax County teacher and resident, I give the number for my local jurisdiction. You should get the number for traffic violations in your area.

A possible worksheet might look like the following (Note that I ask students to write their answers in a complete sentence for writing practice.):

TRAFFIC DIVISION FOR THE GENERAL DISTRICT COURT OF FAIRFAX COUNTY: **703-246-2364**

Please answer these questions with a complete sentence. You may listen to the recordings as many times as you wish, but I would suggest three times.

1. You forgot to wear your seatbelt? How much do you pay?

2. You drove west on 66 at 5:30 pm and were stopped? How much do you pay for a HOV violation. What does HOV mean?

3. You were driving 45 mph in a 25 mph zone? How much do you pay?

4. You ran a red light? How much do you pay?

5. Your registration is expired? How much do you pay?

6. How much is the processing fee?

7. To whom do you make the check payable?

8. Where do you mail the check?

9. What number do you call for further questions?

ACTIVITY 35: FIELD TRIP TO THE LOCAL TRAFFIC COURT (ALL LEVELS)

A day at traffic court is an eye-opener for all drivers. Though a beginning student will not understand everything that is going on, I still suspect it will be a visit not soon forgotten.

After students have listened to possible violations, it should be interesting to watch these matters being adjudicated.

ACTIVITY 36: A GUEST SPEAKER: A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

Another follow up here would be to arrange for your local police department to send a representative to address your class. Most area police departments are accommodating. Students could work on possible questions before the representative comes. This discussion will probably not be useful at a beginning level because the students will not have the language to ask questions. Even at a higher level, don't be surprised if your students are tongue-tied in front of a uniform, badge and gun. Never surprise your students with an unannounced visit to their class by the police. Rather, the more you prepare them, the better the session will go.

ACTIVITY 37: PRE-LISTENING DISCUSSION ABOUT DATING AND MARRIAGE CUSTOMS (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

Marriage is another area covered by American laws and usually of interest to your students. Dating customs and marriage rituals are wonderful opportunities for cross-cultural sharing. If any students are already married, ask them to bring their wedding pictures or videos. (My newly married Korean students all have videos.) Some of the best discussions I have ever had in the ESL classroom have been concerning dating and marriage customs.

ACTIVITY 38: CALLING THE LOCAL MARRIAGE BUREAU (IN VIRGINIA) 703-246-2993. (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

There's a lot of information here, and the vocabulary will be difficult. I think you will have to preview the vocabulary that your students will here. Possible information that you might have your students get from the recording could include:

1. How much does the license cost?
2. What kind of identification must you show?
3. Is a blood test required?
4. How many witnesses must you have?
5. Is a religious ceremony required?
6. What must you do if you are 16 or 17 years old?

ACTIVITY 39: POST LISTENING WRITING (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

After having listened to the recording and discussed it in class, students could write a paragraph or more comparing marriage laws and age limits, etc., between their country and the U.S. Most people who are married or of marriage age have an idea of the laws in their countries. Although anthropologists tell us that they have never studied a society of humans, primitive or highly sophisticated, that did not have marriage, still, societies do have different customs and laws.

V. STORIES

ACTIVITY 40: LISTENING TO A STORY (ALL LEVELS)

What person has not enjoyed listening to stories? There are many ways to practice this listening activity. You can read a favorite story to your students. There are many wonderful Christmas stories, for example, that might be appropriate in the winter. My students have enjoyed listening to O. Henry's "Gift of the Magi." You can make a tape of the story and give each student a copy. Tapes are not terribly expensive. You might be lucky enough to have a telephone company or local library service that provides a story or joke to listen to.

We are quite lucky in the Washington area because the Washington D.C. Public Library has a wonderful service, Dial-A-Story, where each week a different story is played. These are popular stories usually understood by higher level students without great difficulty.

Listening activities should be appropriate to the level of your students whatever story they listen to, whether you read it or they listen to a tape.

At a beginning level, you might tell the story or read the story before the students listen to the recorded version. You might give them a complete transcript of the story with only a few words left out. You might ask them to listen and only get one element of the story: for example, the title or who the story is about.

At a higher level, students will be able to do more with the story. You might devise a jig-saw exercise as in ACTIVITY 18. You might divide your students into groups and assign them each a narrative question: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and see their answers the next day. You might give them a worksheet where they have to answer various questions. What I like to do at an advanced level is have the students listen to then write the story in their own words. My worksheet for this activity follows ACTIVITY 41.

ACTIVITY 41: STUDENTS WRITE POPULAR OR FOLK STORIES FROM THEIR OWN COUNTRIES (INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED)

A cross-cultural activity would be for the students to write stories from their own countries. These stories could be worked on at home or in class. These stories should then be shared with the other students. I enjoy collecting the stories, copying them and giving the collection to each student as a "graduation gift" when the class finishes the session.

DIAL-AND-TELL-THE-STORY

Please call (Local) **202-638-5717**. This is a free, 24-hour number, a service provided by the Washington, D.C. Public Library.

1. What is the title of the story?

2. Please tell the story "in your words" as much as you understood. You might mention the following: who is the story about? What happened? Where and when did it happen? What is the meaning of the story?

VI. LEAVING A MESSAGE

ACTIVITY 42: PRACTICE LEAVING A MESSAGE (ALL LEVELS)

You might begin this activity by asking your students how many of them had answering machines or voice mail in their countries. Then ask them how many have or know friends who have answering machines. Loved or hated, mostly hated, answering machines or voice mail, in 90's jargon, are a reality in American businesses and homes. Students need to know how to use them.

First, let them practice in the classroom. Divide the students into groups depending on the number of tape recorders and tapes that you have available. You need at least two groups, and between four and six to a group seems a optimum size. Have the students in each group practice among themselves by leaving a message on the tape. Each student must leave one message, no matter how shy he or she is.

Second, after each student has left a message in each group, the whole class is pulled back together and all the messages are played, with members of one group responding to the taped messages from another group. As the messages are played, students are requested to answer three questions: Who is the person speaking? What is the telephone number to record the call? What is the message, the main idea? I list all this information on the board?

Finally, I ask students to choose the three students they could understand the most clearly and to articulate why they think they could understand those students so well.

ACTIVITY 43: LEAVING THE MESSAGE (ALL LEVELS)

Have your students actually leave a message on a real answering machine. I let them call me at home, specifying that they must call when it's likely that no one will be home, like the midafternoon. Then I tell my children not to answer the phone for this one afternoon. Without fail so far, the students have never called after the time I have set for them not to call. I tell them that they may leave me any message they want, as long as they leave their name and telephone number. I also warn them that the tape will be played for the whole class the following day. I encourage them as much as I can to please do their homework this one time. Usually, most of the students do leave their original, personal messages on my answering machine.

ACTIVITY 44: LISTENING TO THE MESSAGES (ALL LEVELS)

The next day I play the tape of all the student messages. We always have a good time listening to each other. I give each of them a worksheet like the following, and we work together. Invariably, students will observe that the messages that are easy to understand are spoken a little slowly, use good pronunciation and relatively simple sentences; whereas, difficult messages are spoken too rapidly and/or softly and seem too involved in terms of vocabulary and/or sentence structure. Generally, students feel more comfortable with their own voices and with answering machines after this exercise. More practice can be done as needed. Here is my worksheet:

LEAVING A MESSAGE ON THE ANSWERING MACHINE

NAME	NUMBER	MESSAGE
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		

16. How many students called? How many students did not call?

17. If you did not do your homework, please tell me why?

18. Which two or three students do you think spoke most clearly?

19. Why do you think they spoke so clearly?

20. Write on the back of this paper what you can you do to improve your speaking ability so that people can understand you better?

VII. DO IT YOURSELF

I think you can see by now the pattern that I have tried to follow. First, you start with a pre-listening activity that prepares the students for the listening activity that will follow. Discussions, vocabulary, videos can all be used.

Second, you have the students complete the listening activity on their own time on their own telephones. Give them a worksheet. Focus their listening; in other words, give them a specific task to perform that is appropriate to their level and to their interests as adult learners. And hold them accountable! In other words, process the homework the next class. If they didn't do it, ask them why.

Third, follow up the homework with some post-listening activities that integrate the four language skills, especially, at all levels, some form of writing. For instance, you may use the actual message for a listening dictation exercise. Radio Shack and other electrical stores have recording devises that allow you to tape right off the telephone. You may make a transcript of the message and use it as a reading activity or for a cloze exercise. You may make sentence strips taken from the message, scramble the strips and have the students, for a group activity, put the strips in the proper sequence. You can have them write their own messages, etc.

That's the pattern. Now it's your turn to think of your own activities. The only limitation is your own creativity. So go to it. Good luck!